

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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-----013551 091518Z /45
R 091433Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5915

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STADIS////////////////////////////////////

E.O. LL652: N/A
TAGS: APER, AODE
SUBJECT: PERSONNEL LEVELS-ABMC

REF: (A) STATE 197058; (B) TELECON DCM GAMMON/
R GLYNN MAYS 7/31/78

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED COPY OF DEPARTMENT LETTER TO SECRETARY ABMC AND HIS JUNE 8 REBUTTAL. EMBASSY IS ALSO IN RECEIPT OF EXTENSIVE MATERIALS FROM CONGRESSMAN TEAGUE, FORMER CHAIRMAN VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, AND IS EXPECTING VISIT TO FRANCE OF CONGRESSMAN SATTERFIELD IN CONNECTION WITH OUR RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING ABMC AMERICAN STAFFING LEVELS. WE HAVE POUCHED TO M/MS, ATTENTION GLYNN MAYS, COPY OF DCM'S REPLY TO CONGRESSMAN TEAGUE DATED AUGUST 1 AND WE WILL BRIEF CONGRESSMAN SATTERFIELD ALONG SAME LINES.

2. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT ITS ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION CONTAINED IN PARIS 11655 AND PREVIOUS, SUGGESTING REPLACEMENT OF EIGHT CEMETERY SUPERINTENDENTS AND ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS BY FSLs, REMAINS GENERALLY
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VALID. WE WERE MOTIVATED IN THIS RECOMMENDATION BY THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS IN THE CABINET MARCH L3 CONCERNING AMERICAN STAFFING LEVELS OVERSEAS. WE ARE NOT REPEAT NOT UNHAPPY WITH THE EXISTING LEVEL OF STAFFING WHICH (AS IN THE CASE OF RFDPC) PROVIDES SOME BENEFITS TO THE EMBASSY. IF THE MOBILIZATION OF CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR EXISTING AMERICAN

STAFFING LEVELS OF ABMC REACHES LEVEL WHERE IT BECOMES POLITICAL PROBLEM FOR THE DEPARTMENT, WE WOULD CHEERFULLY WITHDRAW RECOMMENDATION AND EXIST HAPPILY AT PRESENT LEVELS OF ABMC AMERICAN STAFFING.

3. AS EMBASSY INFORMED CONGRESSMAN TEAGUE, "AMERICAN PERSONNEL STATIONED AT THE VARIOUS CEMETERIES SERVE AS DIPLOMATIC AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OUTPOSTS OF THE EMBASSY, MAINTAINING RELATIONS WITH SOLID FRENCH CITIZENS AND CULTIVATING FRIENDS FOR THE U.S. IN THE PROVINCES IN A WAY WE CANNOT OTHERWISE DO." WE RECOGNIZE THAT PROBLEM IN SUBSTITUTING LOCAL PERSONNEL FOR AMERICANS COMES NOT ON MAINTENANCE, SUPERVISION AND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE BUT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL SIDE OF THE ISSUE, SINCE VISITING AMERICANS, ESPECIALLY NEXT-OF-KIN OF FALLEN, UNDERSTANDABLY PREFER TO DEAL WITH A FELLOW AMERICAN. THIS IS THE REASON WE BELIEVE REDUCTION OF AMERICANS AND SUBSTITUTION OF FOREIGN NATIONAL EMPLOYEES POSES LEAST PROBLEM AT WORLD WAR I CEMETERIES, WHERE NUMBER OF AMERICAN AND PARTICULARLY NEXT-OF-KIN VISITORS IS MARKEDLY BELOW LEVEL AT WORLD WAR II CEMETERIES.

4. WE DEFER TO GENERAL ADAMS REGARDING NATIONALITY OF SUPERINTENDENT AT MEXICO CITY NATIONAL CEMETERY. WE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WOULD ALSO NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT DURING SOMETIMES LENGTHY ABSENCES OF OISE-AISNE WORLD WAR I CEMETERY SUPERINTENDENT, A SUPERBLY QUALIFIED BRITISH EMPLOYEE HAS SERVED ABLY AND EFFECTIVELY AS ACTING SUPERINTENDENT WITHOUT COMPLAINT.

5. IN SHORT, OUR CONCLUDING JUDGEMENT IS THAT TECHNICALLY AND FROM STANDPOINT OF MANAGERIAL EFFICIENCY, SUBSTITUTION OF QUALIFIED FSLs IS ENTIRELY FEASIBLE. JUDGEMENT MUST BE MADE BY DEPARTMENT WHETHER LEVEL OF CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE, REFLECTING HIGH STANDING OF EXCELLENTLY MANAGED AND EMOTIONALLY CHARGED OVERSEAS CEMETERY PROGRAM, MAKES REDUCTION UNDESIRABLE. WE WILL YIELD GRACEFULLY, AND INDEED HAPPILY, IF OVERRULED BY THE DEPARTMENT IN THIS CASE.
HARTMAN

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